

**Ethical Standards  
For Culturally  
Competent Practice**

*with* **Lambers Fisher, LMFT**

Hosted by:  
23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL  
**GULF COAST  
SOCIAL WORK  
CONFERENCE**

© 2025 LAMBERS FISHER, LAMBERS@LAMBERSFISHER.COM, LAMBERSFISHER.COM

1

**LAWS & ETHICS:  
THE SPECIFICS VS. THE GRAY**

---

***Codes of Ethics***

NASW, ASWB, AAMFT, APA, NBCC and other professional associations acknowledge the need for mental health professionals to make intentional efforts to reduce bias, prejudice, and discrimination based on cultural factors such as... ***Race, Age, Ethnicity, Culture, Color, Socioeconomic status, Mental or Physical Disability, Language, Gender, Health status, Religion, National origin, Immigration Status, Political Belief, Sexual orientation, Gender identity or Relationship status.***

2

2

## ETHICAL CULTURAL COMPETENCE MOTIVATION

- *Cultural Identity* can be a significant factor in the identity of helping professionals and the clients they serve
  - In an increasingly diverse world, helping professionals must adapt
- Perceptions of *Cultural Similarities & Differences* can:
  - **Improve** personal and professional interactions
    - *Increased rapport leads to Increased efficacy & outcomes*
  - or **Hinder** personal and professional interactions
    - *Misunderstandings & Cultural Offenses can cause Division and contribute to unintentional identity trauma via culturally misguided treatment recommendations, misdiagnoses, etc.)*
- Ethical standards hold professionals accountable
  - *To Offer More Benefit than Harm, requires cultural competence*

3

3

## SCOPE OF ETHICAL CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- **Professional Self-Care**
  - *Prevention of Fear, Resentment, & Burnout is ethical*
- **Client Care**
  - *Clients, Colleagues, & Supervisees need ethical care*
- **Community Care**
  - *Individual & System-wide efforts have broader impact*

4

4

## R.A.R.E. CULTURAL COMPETENCY™

AN ATTAINABLE GOAL FOR ETHICAL CULTURAL COMPETENCE

### **Reduce** the Frequency of Cultural Offenses

- *Increased cultural knowledge improves culturally considerate decision making*
- *Increased cultural self-awareness reduces vilification and invalidation of others' experiences*
- *Investing in cross-cultural rapport increases grace to clarify genuine misunderstandings*

### **Accept** the Inevitability of Offense

- *Include Yourself as well as Others – Perfection is an unreasonable standard*
- *Reduce reactivity and unhealthy decisions influenced by fears and defensiveness*

### **Repair** Relationships After Offenses Occur

- *Cultivate confident humility*
  - *Confidence avoids the self-deprecation that shifts focus of the offense off the offended*
  - *Humility shows acknowledgment of impact and a considerate openness to learn and grow*

### **Empower** Others to Do the Same

- *Mediate... Advocate... Inform... Impact...*

5

## A GUIDING PERSPECTIVE

Multicultural Competence is a ***Journey***, Not a Destination



The Realistic Goal is ***Competence***, Not ***Expertise***

6

6



## ETHICALLY VALUING VARYING CULTURAL IDENTITIES EXPRESSIONS & NEEDS

(c/o John's Hopkins University Diversity Leadership Council)



7

7

## DEVELOPMENT THEORIES OF MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE

*Common themes among developmental models include:*

- **Ethnocentrism**
  - Ignorance of One's Own "Lack of Knowledge"
- **Self-Awareness**
  - Regarding One's Own Ethnocentrism
- **Other Awareness**
  - Including Transitions from Denial, to Inconvenience, to Appreciation of the Experiences of Others
- **Accountability**
  - In Relation to One's Impact on Others
- **Advocacy**
  - Directly or Indirectly Contributing to the Appropriate Treatment of Others

8

8

## LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH & POTENTIAL RISKS

---

- **Limited Research**
  - Developmental Models Lack Empirical Support
  - Ever changing cultural values, needs & expressions
- **Limited Scope**
  - Beyond Clients to Counselors, Supervisors, Colleagues, etc.
- **Limited Awareness**
  - Ignorance of Ignorance contributes to Unknown Offenses
  - Clinical Professionals often feel intimidated and lack confidence to address varying cultural needs

9

9

## CULTURALLY COMPETENT LANGUAGE USE

---

- Language is essential to *individual identity*
    - *Respect/disrespect for my language can communicate the same of me*
  - Language is essential to *interpersonal communication*
    - *Effective/Ineffective communication can strengthen/divide a relationship*
    - *Reducing Cultural miscommunication can reduce the likelihood of unintentional unethical harm*
- 
- **Learn & Respect** language use and contributing factors
    - Includes Cultural Terms of Reference, Pronouns, Meaning, etc.
  - **Avoid arguing** right/wrong language use
    - *Helps avoid communicate right/wrong views of client identity &/or feelings*
  - **Be flexible** out of consideration and care

10

10

## A CLIENT-CENTERED APPROACH TO CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- **Empathy**
  - Validate their perspective and feelings, not as right or wrong, but as legitimate based on their personal cultural experiences
    - Relate based on your *closest similar personal and professional experiences*
    - *"I can see how you believe..."*
- **Unconditional Positive Regard**
  - Take an interest in their cultural experiences
- **Genuineness**
  - Authentically Be & Accept Yourself
  - Sincerely Respect their cultural identification
    - Genuineness can increase the likelihood of grace & forgiveness for micro-aggressions

11

11

## WHEN *CLIENTS* FEEL OFFENDED

- **Professional Responsibility**
  - *Regularly look for* abrupt changes in rapport
    - *Resistance, Non-Compliance, Withdrawal, Early termination*
  - *Own the impact* of the micro-aggression
  - *Initiate healing* of damage done to rapport
    - *Flexibility, Learning, Respect & Curiosity*
- **Client Responsibility**
  - Learn how to better address micro-aggressions that occur outside of the professional relationship, *by learning from the professional's modeling* a healthy manner of addressing perceived micro-aggressions that occur within the professional relationship.

12

12



## WHEN *PROFESSIONALS* FEEL OFFENDED

- **Look For it**
  - Signs: Anger / Resentment, Anxiety / Uncomfortability, Limited Empathy, etc.
  - Continually ask yourself whether cultural differences are influencing your or client's perspective
- **Own It**
  - Own your feelings and reactions to *client* cultural scenarios
  - Own your assumptions based on *your* cultural experiences (*both positive and negative*)
- **Process it**
  - Journal, Personal Therapy, etc.

13

13

## FINAL THOUGHTS:

### *GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ETHICAL CONSIDERATION*

- **Accept the Limitations of Your Knowledge**
  - Mistakes will happen: *Acknowledge, Own, Learn, Reduce*
  - Always be open to *Correction, Clarification, and Modification*
  - No matter what you know about a group, the client is still the expert on their own personal experiences
- **Value the Knowledge that you do have**
  - Don't assume that because you don't know *everything* about a group, that you know *nothing* about their experiences
- **Intentionally Seek New Knowledge**
  - Whether from similar personal experiences or the experiences of others, always be on the lookout for opportunities to relate to others different than oneself


14

14

## A GUIDING PERSPECTIVE

---

Multicultural Competence is a **Journey**, Not a Destination




Are You **ON THE ROAD** to Cultural Competence?

15

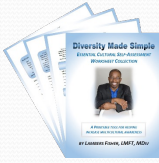
15

## THANK YOU + BONUS RESOURCES!!!



---

Complete a **Brief Feedback Survey** & Receive Lambers'









FREE

Multicultural  
Self-Assessment  
Worksheets

DiversityMadeSimple.com/  
Feedback

& Follow Me:

Website: [LambersFisher.com](http://LambersFisher.com)  
 Twitter: [Twitter.com/LambersFisher](https://twitter.com/LambersFisher)  
 Email: [Lambers@LambersFisher.com](mailto:Lambers@LambersFisher.com)  
 LinkedIn: [LinkedIn.com/in/LambersFisher](https://www.linkedin.com/in/LambersFisher)  
 Facebook: [Facebook.com/LambersFisherMFT](https://www.facebook.com/LambersFisherMFT)  
 YouTube: [YouTube.com/@LambersFisherMFT](https://www.youtube.com/@LambersFisherMFT)

Also Consider Lambers'  
Award-Winning Book:



Diversity in Clinical Practice:

A Practical & Shame-Free Guide to  
Reducing Cultural Offenses &  
Repairing Cross-Cultural  
Relationships

Available **TODAY** & at **Amazon.com**  
Also Available as an **Audiobook!**

16



## REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, D.C: American Psychiatric Association.
- American Psychological Association (2017) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>
- Coleman, Hardin L. K. (1998). *General and Multicultural Counseling Competency: Apples and Oranges?* *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 26(3), 147-156.
- Johns Hopkins University – Diversity Leadership Council (2019, June). *Diversity Wheel*. Retrieved from [http://web.jhu.edu/dlc/resources/diversity\\_wheel](http://web.jhu.edu/dlc/resources/diversity_wheel)
- Moleiro, C., Freire, J., Pinto, N. & Roberto, S. (2018). Integrating diversity into therapy processes: The role of individual and cultural diversity competences in promoting equality of care. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 18(2), 190–198
- Nair, N., Deborah, C. G., & Murrell, A. J. (2019). Microaggression experiences of different marginalized identities. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 38(8), 870-883. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2018-0221>
- Ponterotto, J. G., Fuertes, J. N., & Chen, E. C. (2000). Models of multicultural counseling. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling psychology* (pp. 639-669). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Priest, R. (1994). Minority supervisor and majority supervisee: Another perspective of clinical reality. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 34(2), 152-158.
- Sue, D. W. & Sue, D., Neville, H. A., & Smith, L. (2019). *Counseling the Culturally Diverse Theory and Practice* (8th Edition). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

17